C1 (Cont.) of its diameter can be effectively prevented from being increased.--

IN THE CLAIMS:

All pending Claims 1 to 11 are presented herein in full text for the Examiner's consideration.

1. (Amended) An optical-element holding mechanism comprising:

a first holding member arranged to hold a first optical element;

a second holding member arranged to hold a second optical element;

a plurality of coupling members arranged to couple said first holding member and said second holding member, and to permit relative positions of said first holding member and said second holding member to be varied in the process of being coupled; and

a plurality of an urging members respectively disposed between each of said plurality of coupling members and said second holding member, and arranged to urge and press said second holding member against said first holding member at least when said plurality of coupling members are

in the process of coupling said first holding member and said second holding member through alignment of respective optical axes of the first optical element and the second optical element.

2. (Amended) An optical-element holding mechanism according to claim 1, wherein each coupling member is a screw arranged to couple said first holding member and said second holding member by press contact.

Contd C12

3. (Amended) An optical-element holding mechanism according to claim 2, wherein each urging member is a deformable washer that generates an elastic force, and through which a shaft of said screw pierces.

4. (Amended) An optical-element holding mechanism according to claim 1, further comprising a deformation restricting member arranged to restrict deformation of said first holding member while the relative positions of said first holding member and said second holding member are in the process of being varied and when said plurality of coupling members are in the process of

coupling said first holding member and said second holding member.

5. (Amended) An optical-element holding mechanism according to claim 4, wherein said deformation restricting member is disposed between each coupling member and said first holding member.

6. (Amended) An optical-element holding mechanism according to claim 4, wherein each urging member is disposed between a coupling member and said deformation restricting member.

7. (Amended) An optical-element holding mechanism according to claim 1, further comprising a friction preventing member disposed between each coupling member and said second holding member and arranged to prevent generation of a frictional force between said coupling member and said second holding member when said coupling member is in the process of coupling said first holding member and said second holding members.

8. (Amended) An optical-element holding mechanism according to claim 7, wherein movement of said friction preventing member within a plane of varying the relative positions of said first holding member and said second holding member is restricted.

9. (Amended) An optical-element holding mechanism according to claim 7, further comprising a deformation restricting member arranged to restrict deformation of said first holding member while the relative positions of said first holding member and said second holding member are in the process of being varied and when said plurality of coupling members are in the process of coupling said first holding member and said second holding member, wherein said friction preventing member serves also as said deformation restricting member.

Cont'd C2

10. (Amended) An optical-element holding mechanism according to claim 7, wherein each urging member is disposed between a coupling member and said friction preventing member.

11. (Twice Amended) An optical apparatus comprising:

an apparatus body; and

an optical-element holding mechanism including:

a first holding member arranged to hold a first optical element;

a second holding member arranged to hold a second optical element;

a plurality of coupling members arranged to couple said first holding member and said second holding member, and to permit relative positions of said first holding member and said second holding member to be varied in the process of being coupled; and

a plurality of urging members respectively disposed between each of said plurality of coupling members and said second holding member, and arranged to urge and press said second holding member against said first holding member at least when said plurality of coupling members are in the process of coupling said first holding member and said second holding member through alignment of respective optical axes of the first optical element and the second optical element.

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